

VZCZCXRO8581
PP RUEHRN
DE RUEHMR #0555/01 3071018
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P R 031018Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2409
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHOR/AMEMBASSY GABORONE 0272
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 2739

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 MASERU 000555

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR DS A/S GRIFFITH, DS DAS STARR, AF A/S FRAZER AND AF/EX NOLAN
AND AF/EX - KEETON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/3/2016

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S QUARTERLY SECURITY REPORT - JULY THROUGH
MID-OCTOBER 2006

REF: (A) 10/13 PERRY/STARR/KEETON WASHINGTON MTG. (B) MASERU 346

MASERU 00000555 001.2 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY: June Carter Perry, Ambassador, EXEC , STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) The critical threat environment remains in Maseru (see incidents below) and has been exacerbated by considerable political disruptions. The former Communication Minister resigned, formed a new political party and gained support (allegedly "bought") from 17 ruling party parliamentarians. Mass rallies October 29 & 30 were said to draw 5000 people, including disaffected youth. (With a 50% unemployment rate, the socio/economic situation is precarious.) Diplomatic missions have urged the GOL and opposition parties to proceed in an orderly fashion toward the first major national elections, scheduled for 2007. Adding to the sense of insecurity have been both rumors and direct comments to the U.S. and other Ambassadors by senior GOL leaders that elections could be called "tomorrow" or at any time the Prime Minister so determines. We and others have spoken frankly with Cabinet members and the Independent Electoral Commission about the absolute necessity of proceeding in a peaceful way to (a) continue donor support and (b) ensure the safety of foreign as well as local citizens.

¶2. (SBU) Based on the 2005 municipal elections, when the government had law enforcement and military personnel out in force, a peaceful process can occur. However, the raucous actions of opposition youth league crowds, bombing of opposition headquarters and attempted (one successful) assassinations (of the Foreign Minister and an opposition leader) do not create a conducive atmosphere when coupled with the discontent of youth and the unemployed. Guaranteeing the safety and security of the now 40 plus official USG personnel (including exponential dependent family member growth) in addition to the nearly 100 Peace Corps Volunteers, 200 American missionaries and over 200 TDY USG personnel annually raises the urgency of post's need for a resident RSO as soon as possible. Post appreciates DS and AF's commitment to a slot and proposed "NOW" vacancy on bid list for this position.

¶3. (S) In addition to previously reported Missionary family being held at gunpoint in their home by an armed gang, a Peace Corps Volunteer was held up at knife point in the afternoon of October 22 and an MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) project team faced the same situation a few weeks ago. American citizens have been warned regularly through the warden system of the dangerous situation, particularly in the capital, and USG employees/family members and Peace Corps Volunteers are

repeatedly advised to avoid walking in the city at any time due to day and evening attacks. The Ambassador has reiterated this message through Town Hall meetings as well as in writing. We urge Department's quickest response by RSO to review new housing, upgrade local guard service and training and assessment. We note that on October 20, Ambassador was told by the South African High Commissioner that the Middle Eastern Mediterranean Restaurant, previously alleged to be a cover for Al Qaida, is regularly surveilled by his Mission as the RSA remains concerned about the real objectives of this establishment. It is one frequented by U.S. TDY and Peace Corps personnel.

14. Post looks forward to permanent assignment of resident RSO.

15. (U) PSO received the following direct reports:

July: An armed robbery of an AmCit family residence in Maseru occurred. Fortunately, no one sustained serious injury but a number of household effects were stolen.

Sept 25th: The Post Security Office received reports of fighting between Maputsoe and Maseru taxi drivers over a two-day period. Apparently taxi drivers and some passengers were injured as a result. Peace Corps security office advised that fighting took place at ha Foso near the Mokhethoaneng junction located about five miles north of Maseru along the main road.

The FSNI investigated these reports further and PSO kept the mission apprised of continuing developments. There has been no definitive settlement to this issue. Sporadic violence continues to be reported, most especially between taxi owners, many of whom are armed.

Sept 29th: The Post Security Officer (PSO) received and verified two reports of night time robberies which took place over the previous two nights in the Thetsane area of Maseru. The first incident involved a non-US Embassy employee in which a family was held up at gunpoint while driving their vehicle.

MASERU 00000555 002.2 OF 003

Armed gunmen stopped the vehicle and shot the driver and one passenger. The gunshot wounds were reportedly not life threatening.

The second incident involved an embassy FSN who also was stopped by armed gunmen around 9 PM on Sept 28th. The employee sustained minor injuries on his arm when fending off an attack with an iron bar. The gunmen attempted to hijack the vehicle but were unsuccessful. They did steal most of the employee's personal effects, including his passport, embassy ID, some effects from the boot (trunk of the car) and his shoes.

There are no indications that these were targeted attacks. The police were officially notified and are conducting follow-on investigations.

PSO increased the number and frequency of US Embassy-dedicated marked vehicles patrolling this area continuously throughout the night until the police can establish the identity of these criminals and they have been apprehended.

Sept 30th: Two more armed robberies took place at ha Thetsane in which a home was burglarized by thieves and a car was hijacked near the IMO residence. The owner of the carjacked vehicle was shot at the IMO residence gate. The Mobile patrol team responded immediately to the scene and facilitated police assistance.

Oct 3rd: US DEA agents informed the PSO of a shipment of 3.5kg of cocaine seized in Belgium destined for Lesotho.

Oct. 13th: An armed robbery took place at one Chinese shop in the Mookoli area (near the Lancers Gap turn-off). Three to five armed men robbed the Chinese at gunpoint and stole M9800.00 and seven cell phones. The private security guard pressed the remote

panic button and our reaction team responded immediately. No one was injured and the police were informed and took further action. No-one was arrested.

October 20th: Ambassador received letter from MIT to advise their project team had been help up in downtown Maseru by armed robbers.

Oct 22: One PCV was robbed in the later afternoon by two thieves carrying knives at the footbridge near the Regal restaurant while crossing Kingsway. They took his cell phone, M60.00 and food he had just bought from town;

Security Coordination:

PSO attended weekly SD coordination meetings as well as regular weekly security briefings with SU Project Manager, FSNI and SD Coordinator.

PSO also attended two Focal Point Security Meetings with wide participation from other diplomatic missions, NGO's, and international organizations.

Excerpts from Police Newsletter - 07/27/2006 to 08/10/2006:

Major General Metsing Lekhanya, former Military Ruler and the present Basotho National Party Leader charged with illegal possession of the following weapons:

1. Uzi model and 24 handcuffs; 2. LM4 rifle, three magazines and 62 handcuffs; 3. 22 Astra unceta revolver; 4. SPI auto pistol 5.9mm pistol and 11 rounds

The accused are Major General Lekhanya, his wife, two daughters, and son and RCC Father Lehloka. All were released on R450.00 bail. The case is in the Maseru Magistrate Court.

Crime:

Maseru: a man was found dead at ha Abia--murder suspected;

Security Lesotho guard was robbed of his Company shotgun;

Thaba-Tseka: A 44 year old woman was raped by her brother;

Semonkong: A 37 year old woman was found dead. The suspicion is that she was shot;

Moriya Maseru: An 83 year old woman was found dead in her burned house. Fire official suspect the fire was caused by a candle;

Ha Marakabei Maseru: A 52 year old woman was attacked and shot to death by two gunmen

Maseru: A woman employed by Central Bank raped her husband working at (Ned Bank) in front of their children at their home.

MASERU 00000555 003.2 OF 003

Excerpts from In the Police News Letter Dated August 24, to September 6, 2006:
CRIME STATUS :

BUTHA-BUTHE : A 32 year old man of Linokong is held by Police after killing another man with a knife;

BUTHA-BUTHE : A Foreign Doctor at Butha-Buthe Government Hospital allegedly raped a patient in the hospital. The Police investigation is proceeding;

BUTHA-BUTHE : A 7 year old girl was raped by her 27 year old father;

LERIBE : Leribe High School Students caused significant damage to school buildings, including attempting to burn the school library.

BEREA : A 34 year old man's house was burned to ashes by unknown people. estimated cost of damage is about M15,300.

MAFETENG : A 19 year old man was killed by a teenager. Police have arrested the killer.

MOHALESHOEK : A 44 year old man of Quthing was found dead at Maphutseng. Suspicion is that he was given drugs, robbed then killed as he came from work in the mines of RSA.

QUTHING : A 44 year old woman of Tebellong was found hanging dead in her house. Police suspect suicide.

THABA-TSEKA : An 18year old woman was raped at her village and Police have arrested the suspect.

MASERU, Ha Thetsane: Three armed men entered and robbed the shop owner of M400.00 and food stuffs then disappeared;

MASERU : Major General and leader of BNP Mr. Lekhanya, her maid his three family members and RCC Father will appear in Court on 11/09/06 charged with illegal possession of many firearms.

MASERU : A man set his own house alight then hanged himself. A two-year-old baby was rescued from the flames as the house burned to ashes with the father still hanging and burning inside. This happened after this man quarreled with his wife.

Other Reports:

MAZENOD: Oct 24th: Armed criminals entered the seminary early in the morning attempting to burglarize the property. One priest was shot dead. Another priest shot one of the burglars dead. No other details are currently available.
PERRY